



Department of Development Services
Planning Division
Meeting Minutes of the
Planning & Zoning Commission
(Approved)

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2010

Commissioners Present

Sandra Bobowski
Temple Shannon
David Blatt
Edwin Vargas, Jr.
John Lupo, Jr.
Gerry Pleasent, Alternate

Staff Present

Roger J. O'Brien
Kim Holden
Jonathan Mullen
Don Chapman

Commissioners Absent

David Jorgensen, Alternate

I. Public Listening Session

- a. Comments will be taken regarding One City, One Plan, Hartford's Plan of Conservation and Development focusing on the Barry Square, MARG, Sheldon-Charter Oak, South End, South Meadows, and Southwest neighborhoods. General comments regarding other neighborhoods will also be taken during the session.**

Chairperson Bobowski opened the public listening session. She discussed the process of the five themed panels that had taken place as well as the listening sessions that will occur to get each individual neighborhood involved. She then introduced Roger O'Brien to give a presentation regarding One City, One Plan.

Mr. O'Brien stated that the main focus of the meeting would be the land use map, which is the basis for how the zoning is determined. He also stated that he would cover points in One City, One Plan for those who may not be familiar with it, and also the important aspects that impact specific neighborhoods.

Mr. O'Brien discussed different types of neighborhood plans, community development plans, NRZ plans, and redevelopment plans and stated that the goal of One City, One Plan is to sync all of them.

Mr. O'Brien summarized the main goals of One City, One Plan, and also the outcome of the five themed panels as far as what the audience wanted to see as main points of focus.

Mr. O'Brien discussed how the future land use map would be a main area of revision during the process of completing One City, One Plan. He reviewed different areas of the map and discussed possible changes that will be made for land use categories.

Bernadine Silvers asked Mr. O'Brien why the business district appeared to be much larger in one map than the other.

Mr. O'Brien confirmed that the red area she had pointed to was supposed to be green. She then referred to the pink with the stripe area that used to be red. Mr. O'Brien explained that this is the area with the parking lots around the Capitol. He stated that they were calling it a mixed use district because they saw it as an area that could be redeveloped for housing among other things.

An audience member pointed out that an area around Riverside Park had been turned green and Mr. O'Brien confirmed that the goal of the future land use map was to designate more areas to be conserved as green space.

An audience member asked how the different land use categories in the future land use map get tied into the zoning regulations. Mr. O'Brien stated that generalized land use is something that can change throughout the years and that this would be the time to study those areas and modify the zoning districts.

Al Marotta asked what a neighborhood would have to do to make sure certain neighborhood businesses such as an automobile repair shop or nightclub cannot be located within a certain distance of a residence.

Mr. O'Brien suggested that they list specific goals in the neighborhood section of the plan. This could cause the zoning districts to be modified in order prevent certain neighborhood businesses from moving in.

Mr. O'Brien stated that staff member Stephanie Kruel had highlighted all areas of the future land use map that had been changed so that the audience could clearly see the difference between the two.

Mr. O'Brien then discussed the difference between the various residential densities and what they may look like from an aerial photograph.

An audience member stated that one of her biggest concerns for the neighborhood is the big apartment buildings and that she would like to see lower densities in the future such as one and two family houses. She stated that the big apartment buildings cause public safety and quality of life issues and that lower densities are more sustainable.

Mr. O'Brien stated that while going through and making changes to the plan, there were no high density residential areas proposed anywhere: However none of the existing higher density areas have been proposed to be changed or removed. He stated that if there was vacant land, there would be an opportunity to build less dense residential housing. Also, if there was an opportunity

to build less dense housing within a higher density area, they would have to find a way to build at the same scale as surrounding buildings.

Mr. O'Brien stated that he would like to go through each neighborhood chapter and reiterate the goals and then talk about any proposed improvements by hearing from the community.

An audience member stated that they would like to reduce the number of car dealerships and repair shops and night clubs in the Maple Avenue area, and move more towards small businesses that can be successful such as restaurants that would enhance the neighborhood. Mr. O'Brien agreed that that was a goal that has been discussed in the past.

Mr. O'Brien then asked audience members to address concerns regarding Maple Avenue, Barry Square, and MARG areas.

An audience member stated that she would like to see fewer gas stations on Maple Avenue and it was then addressed that it is a part of the redevelopment area so it is something that could be worked on. Mr. O'Brien stated that this is also an issue with the neighborhood business zoning that had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

An audience member suggested acquiring community gardens to beautify the Maple Avenue area. Hyacinth Yennie responded by saying they have looked into a few vacant lots but since the market for buying is not great right now, that there has been no progress made in that area. Mr. O'Brien noted that community gardens are a goal that can be added to the neighborhood section of the plan.

Al Marotta addressed parking issues in the Barry Square area. He noted that many residential areas do not have sufficient parking, which causes cars to park all over the street.

Mr. O'Brien then read the goals of the Sheldon Charter Oak neighborhood.

Bernadine Silvers stated that Fordham Park near Groton and Wyllis Streets needs to be addressed in that part of the plan.

Lynn Ferrari stated that she thought there will be a lot of development in the Sheldon Charter Oak neighborhood near Colt Park and that she is concerned with any parking and congestion issues that may arise.

An audience member suggested community/botanical gardens in the Sheldon Charter Oak neighborhood as well as mixed use buildings to make living in that area more walkable and sustainable. She also mentioned improving the parking lot near the magnet high school in that area so that people would take advantage of that space to park near Colt Park.

An audience member, Karen, stated that in addition to the parking problem near Colt Park, is the lack of public transportation. She stated that it is difficult for people from Downtown to come to that area of the Park. She suggested that the Star Shuttle expand its route.

An audience member suggested designating certain areas to allow for wild animals.

An audience member noted the streetscape improvements to Wethersfield Avenue listed as a goal and stated that the street is broken up with so many different looks that she hopes it can become more uniform.

Al Marotta also suggested adding bike lanes to both Wethersfield Avenue and Franklin Avenue. He also suggested adding more plantings along the sidewalks of both streets to prevent illegal parking.

An audience member stated that people do not take advantage of parking lots located behind businesses and instead park in front of the building and along the streets which causes a lot of congestion. He reiterated keeping cars from parking on the sidewalks.

Bernadine Silvers stated in order for a Wethersfield Avenue streetscape plan to be successful, she thinks that all three involved neighborhoods should be collaborating.

Hyacinth Yennie stated that the Hartford Police Department should take part in enforcing all adopted ordinances. She used the example of an automobile shop on the corner on Brown Street and Franklin Avenue that displays more vehicles than what they have been approved for.

Mr. O'Brien read the goals for the South Meadows neighborhood. He stated that the only request that he was aware of was for traffic improvements to Airport Road.

An audience member stated that the speed bumps added to Wawarme Avenue has made significant improvements to the street racing issues.

Mr. O'Brien then moved onto the goals for the Southwest neighborhood.

A member of the Fairfield Avenue Neighbors Association stated that they would like to see major measures taken to calm the traffic along Fairfield Avenue along with streetscape improvements. She also mentioned possibly turning Fairfield Avenue into a one way street going South.

An audience member stated that he would like to see the area around Highland Park become more pedestrian friendly. He stated that a new little league field will be located within that park and that the area around it needs to be improved. Mr. O'Brien addressed how this issue fits in with park maintenance.

An audience member stated that he would like to see streetscape improvements made to the area of New Britain Avenue entering Hartford from West Hartford.

An audience member stated that there are a lot of areas of the Southwest neighborhood that should have recreational areas added to make it more child-friendly. She stated that the intersection of Grand Street, Newfield Avenue and New Britain Avenue is a large area of concern.

An audience member mentioned the continued redevelopment of the South Park River.

An audience member mentioned the South Green Trident and coming up with a plan to make it more pedestrian friendly. Mr. O'Brien mentioned that the formal plan for the South Green Trident and their recommendations are located within the action items.

An audience member asked if there would be a time where all of the ordinances and regulations were reviewed and made understandable for the public. Mr. O'Brien stated that the zoning ordinance must be based on the Plan of Conservation and Development and the land use, so addressing these changes will be a final step.

An audience member asked how NRZ Strategic Plans will be incorporated into One City, One Plan if they have not been already, and Mr. O'Brien stated that this will occur during the sixty five day comment period.

Mr. O'Brien stated that this would be the time to have informal conversations with members of the Planning and Zoning Commission and to also email One City, One Plan with any further comments or suggestions.

Commissioner Bobowski asked if there was anyone in the audience who had further comments or suggestions to contribute.

An audience member asked if the Plan incorporates the New Britain Busway and the railway between New Haven, Hartford and Springfield. Commissioner Blatt stated that there have been rights of way incorporated into the Plan to prepare for the upcoming multi modal station.

An audience member made a comment about the need for public restrooms.

Hyacinth Yennie made a comment regarding the Planning Division informing NRZ groups about businesses that may be moving in so they can have a say in whether it would enhance the area. Commissioner Bobowski stated that part of the process is that the Planning Division will recommend to applicants that they contact the NRZ before formally applying.

An audience member stated that there are many beauty salons that operate without a state license.

Commissioner Bobowski stated that this is the opportunity for the audience to continue informal conversations and look at the maps.

II. Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Roger J. O'Brien, Secretary/Director